The Preservation of Nazi-Associated Structures in Berlin: Flak Towers

by

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In few cities will one find a landscape so scarred with the physical remains of its contentious recent past as Berlin. The capital city boasts recognizable and well-known relics from not only the Third Reich, but also from its time as communist East and capitalist West Berlin. Inconspicuously sitting in two of Berlin's largest public parks though are two hills not as easily identifiable as other historic sites. Hidden beneath the grassy hills, the massive concrete remains of 1940s flak towers have slowly made their way into the historical consciousness of Berliners. In examining the evolution of the Nazi-built towers in the consciousness of Berliners, this thesis attempts to gain a better understanding of the city's confrontation with the toxic relics in their landscape left from the Third Reich through a less-recognizable and less-contentious structure.

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Chapter One: Center of Nazism

Berlin: Capital of the Third Reich

In few cities will one find a landscape so scarred with the physical remains of a contentious recent past as Berlin. The capital city boasts recognizable and well-known relics from not only the Third Reich, but also from its time as communist East and capitalist West Berlin. The Berlin Wall, the 1936 Olympic Stadium, the Topography of Terror, communist housing blocks; they all easily register on Berlin's memoryscape. Inconspicuously sitting in two of Berlin's largest public parks are two grassy hills. These hills, incorporated into the parks and used by runners, walkers and picnickers, are not as easily identifiable as other historic sites, but what lies beneath them has slowly made its way into the historical consciousness of Berliners. Hidden under the hills are the massive concrete remains of 1940s flak towers. In examining the evolution of the Nazi-built towers in the consciousness of Berliners, this thesis attempts to gain a better understanding of the city's confrontation with its Nazi past through a less-recognizable, less-contentious structure.

Figure 1: Path to top of Friedrichshain tower
Author's photograph

Figure 2: Picnic area on Humboldthain tower
Author's photograph

Some German cities were left more heavily scarred by Nazism and World War II than others. Whether more Nazi buildings were constructed, the Nazi presence was larger or more buildings were destroyed during the war, some cities were left with a larger burden when facing their pasts than others. Munich and Nuremburg were among such cities and, as capital of the Third Reich, Berlin undoubtedly was one of these cities. Unlike some German cities, periphery cities, that survived the Third Reich nearly unscathed by the horrors of Nazism, Berlin and its citizens were at the center of the barbarism. Whereas the citizens of periphery cities have claimed innocence and ignorance of the acts of Nazism, Berliners have never had this option.

Originating and deeply rooted in Bavaria, National Socialism had no strong ties in Berlin early in its creation in the late-1910s. This all changed when in 1926 Joseph Goebbels was appointed Gauleiter, regional party leader, of Berlin, which resulted in a more visible party presence in the city. As National Socialism strengthened and grew throughout the country, so too in Berlin it grew, making possible Adolf Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. From this point forward, Nazism only strengthened in Berlin, soon to become capital of the Third Reich. The Nazi policy of persecution of racially "impure" groups; Jews, gypsies, Communists and homosexuals among others, was heavily practiced in Berlin. By the end of the war Berlin's Jewish community of nearly 170,000 was all but destroyed. Many citizens of Berlin joined the ranks of National Socialism and committed crimes against the ethnically "impure." Also here in the capital many acts of persecution and murder were planned and carried out. These events and sites ranged from the infamous Kristallnacht pogrom in 1938 to smaller, less well-known traveling "wild concentration camps" or Folterkeller where acts of brutality and murder occurred. There were also between 700 and 1000 forced labor camps in the capital during the war.[1] If such actions occurring in the city by its own citizens against one another was not a guilt-ridden enough legacy for Berliners to

[1] Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 159.

face, the landscape of Berlin was also greatly transformed due to its role as capital, creating an ever-present reminder of the Nazi era for citizens to deal with.

The Word in Stone

While walking throughout Berlin one can easily recognize buildings constructed during the Nazi period. In a city without a defining architecture, a city defined by its hodgepodge of old and new, the architecture of National Socialism sits eerily in stark contrast to both, perhaps because of or despite of its bipolarity of old (classicism) and new (modernism). Built to dominate rather than interact with neighboring buildings, Nazi buildings do just that with imposing gray stone (usually granite, limestone or marble) facades, massive proportions and symmetry. Though many elements of buildings from the Third Reich can be attributed to either classicism or modernism, the monumental scale of Nazi buildings, nearing "megalomania," is the one uniquely defining characteristic of these buildings.[2] Termed "overblown neoclassic" by many architectural historians, the Nazi architectural style was based on Paul Ludwig Troost's 1933 neoclassical House of German Art in Munich. While still searching for a national style worthy of Germany, Hitler saw Troost's building and felt its style represented the Third Reich. Hitler then officially endorsed this style as the national architecture of Germany in 1933, forever transforming Berlin and Germany's landscapes. This "new" style, that incorporated classical elements such as columns and massive window and door frames, also exuded elements of functionality, a characteristic of modernism. Though Nazi buildings lacked unnecessary ornamentation, they usually were defined by Third Reich ornamentation such as eagles, swastikas and other national emblems, along with murals and reliefs of strong and youthful men that were meant to promote the Nazi cause.

[2] Jeffry M. Diefendorf, *In The Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 52.

Figure 3: Paul Troost's House of German Art, Munich
Photo Credit: Chiesavecchia Collection

Figure 4: Nazi Eagle, Tempelhof Airport
Author's photograph

Figure 5: Former Reich Aviation Ministry
Author's photograph

Nazi buildings did not just happen to look the way they did on accident, Hitler, who considered himself a "frustrated" architect, played a large role in the creation of a "national" style. Hitler believed in a connection between architecture and race and felt that "monumental architecture" could only be produced by a racially pure nation. Believing in this connection, Hitler wanted to use architecture politically, ideologically and manipulatively, therefore finding the right style was important to him. In creating a monumental Nazi architecture, he looked to buildings, such as Troost's House of German Art, styled after classical buildings of the Roman Empire rather than modern architecture such as the Bauhaus. It was Hitler's belief that Germans were racially tied to the ancient Greeks and Romans, while modern architecture represented Judaism, Bolshevism and all

things racially impure.[3] Despite his hatred of modernism, Hitler incorporated its functionality into the new style, and erroneously saw the mixed style as uniquely German. Neoclassicism was in fact widespread in the 1920s and 1930s in both Europe and America, (Washington D.C.'s National Gallery, Supreme Court, Jefferson Monument), but the Nazis were able to use it so effectively in symbolizing the greatness of the regime and the inadequacy of the individual, that the style was and is still associated with the Third Reich. It is for this reason that many Nazi-built buildings were and have remained contentious.

In only six years from 1933 to 1939, Hitler and the Nazis were able to dramatically alter the landscape of Berlin by destroying historic buildings and constructing new ones, mostly government and office buildings, in the Nazi style. While Hitler's plan for the transformation of Berlin into a world capital based on larger models of Paris and Vienna, "Germania," luckily never reached completion, what was completed scarred the urban fabric of Berlin with remnants of the Nazi period. Hitler hated Berlin's lack of monumental architecture and so he made it a priority to transform the capital and see to it that the new national style was represented in the city. Hitler announced his plan for "Germania" in 1936 and in January 1937 he appointed architect Albert Speer as General Inspector for the Redesign of the Capital.[4] Together, Hitler, who created sketches and approved all final building designs, and Speer aimed to transform Berlin into a world capital "comparable only to Ancient Egypt, Babylon and Rome" by 1950.[5] In doing so, the plan was to remake Berlin's cityscape so that it reflected the power and authority of Hitler and the Nazis. Elements included in this plan were the creation of both a north-south and an east-west axis with a monumental intersection in the center of the city with an impressive and imposing 117 meter high triumphal arch as well as a Great Hall with a 951 foot high dome. The guiding belief behind all aspects of the plan though was that architecture needed to be monumental, needed to subordinate; needed to

[3] Ibid., 53.
[4] Matthias Donath, *Architecture in Berlin 1933-1945: A Guide Through Nazi Berlin* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2006), 9.
[5] Ibid., 7.

strengthen the Fuhrer's and the party's authority. Architecture was not only to be used as an immediate form of propaganda, but even more disturbingly, Hitler wanted his buildings to speak to future generations of his greatness. Berlin was to be "a city for the indefinite future that was worthy of a thousand year old people with a thousand years of historical and cultural heritage."[6] Somewhat fortunately for the historic fabric of Berlin, World War II broke out in 1939, immediately ceasing all construction not crucial to the war cause. The six years from 1933 to 1939 though left behind ever-present reminders of the Nazi era that survived the war and still exist today. While Berlin's landscape is blemished by a number of well-known and contentious sites associated with and built in the Nazi style, there are also a number of less well-known buildings and structures still standing today. These buildings were also used or built by the Nazis with the same ideology and in the same national architecture but quite often are overlooked in studies on the preservation of Nazi-associated structures.

[6] Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 165.

Chapter Two: World War II and the Flak Towers

Berlin suffered its first of 363 air raid attacks on August 25, 1940. The British Royal Air Force (RAF) continued their attacks throughout the year, though causing only slight damage to the city. Despite the minimal damage incurred by Berlin, in a meeting on September 9, 1940, two days after Berlin suffered its longest attack to date, Hitler ordered the construction of six anti-aircraft towers, flak towers, to defend the city. So involved in the architecture and defense of Berlin, Hitler even sketched plans for the towers and outlined strategic locations for their construction.[7] Shortly after the meeting, Hitler's architectural sketches for the towers were handed over to Albert Speer and Fritz Todt, Reich Minister for Armaments and Munitions, for discussion of military and

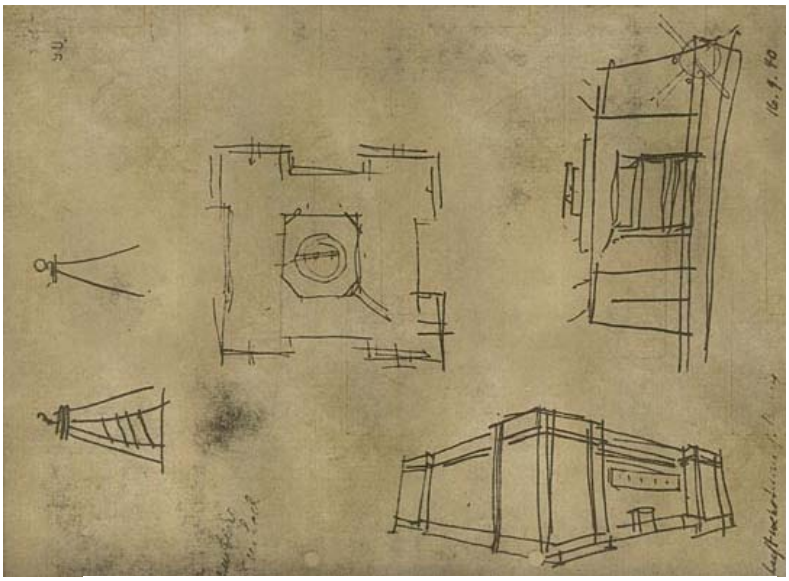

Figure 6: Hitler's sketches for Berlin flak tower
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

structural requirements. With Hitler's design guidelines and Speer and Todt's military and structural requirements established, the flak tower project was finally handed over to architect Friedrich Tamms on October 1, 1940.[8] Tamms, best known for his work on

[7] Holger Happel, "Geschichte der Berliner Flaktuerme," *Berliner Unterwelten e.V.* (July 11, 2007) http://berliner-unterwelten.de/Flakturm-humboldthain.50.0.html (accessed June 2008).
[8] Michael Foedrowitz, *The Flak Towers in Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna 1940-1950* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, 1997), 4.

the design of the Autobahn from 1937 to 1939, worked under both Speer and Todt, as an architect for Operation Todt, a Nazi military and civil engineering group. Considered instrumental to the war, the urgency for the completion of the towers was high. Within four weeks of receiving design guidelines, Tamms' plans for the towers were approved first by Speer and Todt and finally by Hitler, and construction on the first tower, the Zoo Tower, began.

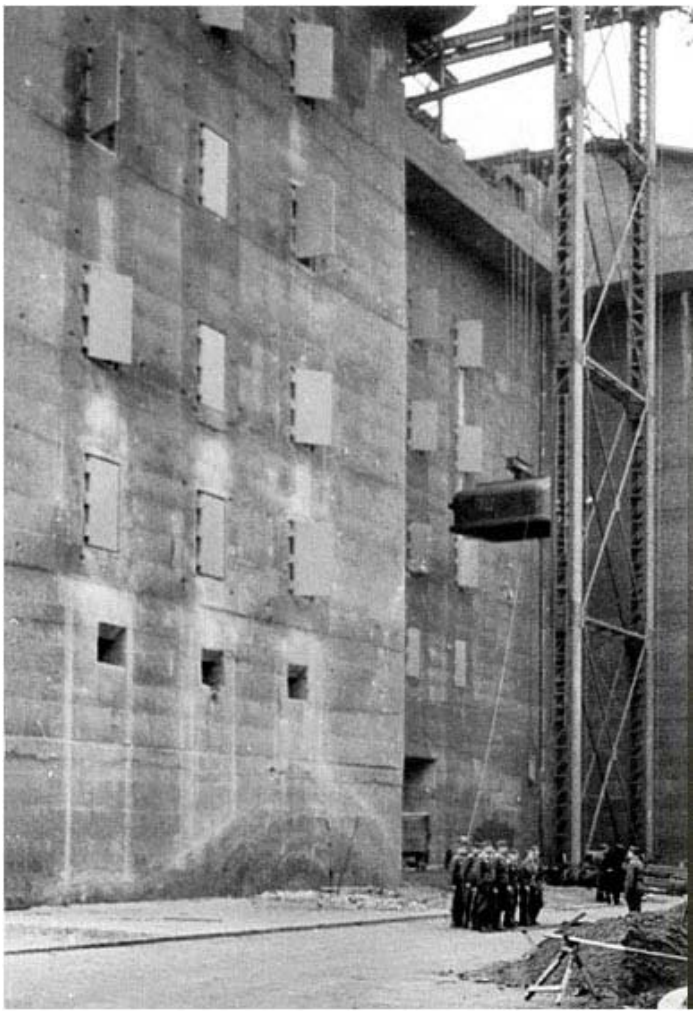

Figure 7: Construction of the Zoo tower
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Approximately 45 million Reichsmark, 100,000 cubic meters of concrete, 10,000 tons of steel and six months later the first German flak tower sat towering above the trees in Berlin's Tiergarten in April 1941.[9] The Zoo Tower would serve as a model for all future towers to be built in Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna. Built to serve two purposes; anti-aircraft defense of the city and protection of tens of thousands of civilians during attacks, the flak tower was understandably impressive. The concrete behemoth, among the largest concrete structures in the Third Reich, was considered a "genuine wonder of defense" by Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and was seen as an example of the Third Reich's technological prowess.[10] The anti-aircraft tower concept was not a Nazi original though. Hitler had taken the concept, which the Japanese had used prior to World War II, and simply treated it like any of their other construction projects by making it monumental in size, scale and design. Constructed from reinforced concrete by forced labor from prisoners of war, the foundations measured 2.5 m thick, the outside walls 2 m, interior walls 1.5 m and the roof an impressive 3.5 m thick.[11] The laborers, mostly French and Russian men, moved 3700 tons of building materials brought in by train and ship daily.[12] The flak tower actually consisted of two towers, a leitturm tower (L tower) and a gefetchtsturm tower (G tower). The G tower was the larger of the two, with a 70 m x 70 m footprint and a height of 39 m. This was the combat tower with pairs of 128 mm guns mounted on its roof. The G tower also acted as the air-raid shelter for Berlin's civilians during air-raid attacks. This tower had prominent corner towers and octagonal tower crowns and the gun emplacements were reminiscent of a medieval castle. The slimmer and smaller L tower's footprint was 25m x 50m and also 39m tall. The L tower acted as the command tower and housed the listening bunker and range finders. The L tower would spot the oncoming air attack with a giant spotlight on its roof and relay this information to the G tower. The G tower was painted gray-green and consisted of a cellar, a ground floor and five upper floors that were all linked by spiral staircases in the tower's corners and center. Two freight

[9] Happel, http://berliner-unterwelten.de/Flakturm-humboldthain.50.0.html.
[10] Foedrowitz, 4.
[11] Foedrowitz, 5
[12] Ibid.

elevators, reserved for those working in the tower, also allowed access between the floors and could also double as holding cells for Luftwaffe members. All flak towers were autonomous structures, having their own electricity, air conditioning and water supplies. In addition to having their own utilities, the towers even had hospitals, usually on the third floor, research labs, equipment workshops and Gestapo stations. The Zoo Tower, the "poshest" of the towers even had a cinema and a hidden space designed to hold valuable art treasures.[13] Most of the treasures from Berlin's museums, including the Golden treasures of Priam, Kaiser Wilhelm's coin collection and a bust of Nefertiti, were stored in the Zoo Tower and were subsequently stolen by the Russians at the end of the war.[14]

Figure 8: Spotlight on L tower
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Figure 9: Munitions on G tower
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Six pairs of flak towers were originally planned for Berlin, but encountering a lack of available funds and equipment, the Nazis instead only built three. Hitler's plan for the six towers was to construct them so that they connected to building and street

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

axes, creating a monumental presence. Instead, Hitler had the three towers strategically constructed to provide a protective triangle around Berlin's city center, home to most government buildings. The Zoo tower protected the southwest, the Friedrichshain tower protected the southeast, and the Humboldthain tower protected northwest Berlin. Construction of both the Friedrichshain and Humboldthain towers ultimately altered the layout, function and landscapes of the parks in which they were built. Both Friedrichshain and Humboldthain Volksparks were designed by Gustav Meyer in the late 19th century as part of a parks initiative. Citizens in each of these neighborhoods originally were angered by the destruction of their parks, but later came to see the towers as safe havens. The Friedrichshain tower was completed in six months and was ready for battle in October 1941. The third tower, the Humboldthain tower, was also completed in a six month period from October 1941 to April 1942. The three towers, identified with roman numerals I, II, and III chiseled on their facades, differed only slightly in design from one another. While the design of the flak towers was originally seen as ingenious by both Germans and the Allies, it soon became apparent that while they could successfully provide protection to thousands of Berliners, they were failures in terms of warfare. A major factor in the failure was the monumental design of the tower, but other factors played a role as well.

One reason for the failure stems from the fact that as the war progressed the most able-bodied men were moved from the flak towers to the mobile field units. Put in their place were old men serving in the Home Guard, teenage boys, youth in the labor service, women auxiliaries, Italian and Hungarian volunteers and Russian prisoners of war; pretty much anyone seen as expendable.[15] Dr. Wolfgang Hauer Wald, conscripted at the age of sixteen along with his high school classmates to serve as "gunners" in the Humboldthain tower, remembers Berlin women saying "Is that not a shame, now they're even killing the young chaps like this…" as he left one tower to seek medical attention at another. While he and his classmates were mostly critical of the Hitler regime and remembers the

[15] Ute Bauer, *Die Wiener Flaktuerme im Spiegel osterreichischer Erinnerungskultur* (Vienna: Phoibos Verlag, 2003), 10.

conditions inside the tower as being dark and dingy, he also remembers the camaraderie among the boys serving at the tower.[16] Another conscripted sixteen year old who served at the Wilhelmsburg flak tower in Hamburg, Gustave Roosen, remembers being pulled from high school and the excitement he felt at becoming a gunner. His memories of the tower revolve around drinking and practical jokes. In his testimony Roosen writes, "I had therefore, with regard to education lost only one year, but there is no yardstick which could measure the experience gained by me as a Luftwaffenhelfer."[17] The use of these young boys and other "expendables" was considered by many Germans, especially the loved ones of these people, as victimization of Germans at the hands of Nazis. This feeling would later create conflict and confusion for many Germans. While true that at the end of the war many of the gunners were inexperienced, not all fault for the failure of the flak towers can be placed on them. Much of the reason for the failure was due to the ridiculous size and monumentality of the towers' design; in other words, the Nazi architecture characteristic used as propaganda.

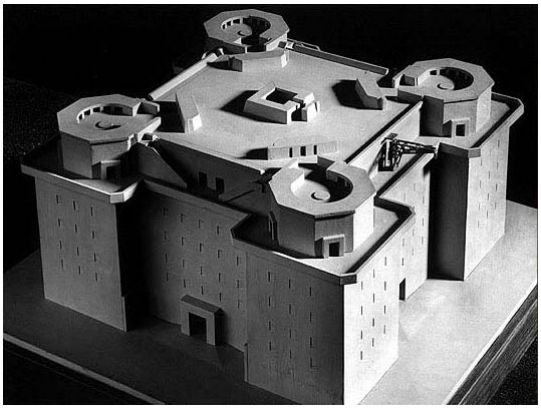

Figure 10: Humboldthain G tower model
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

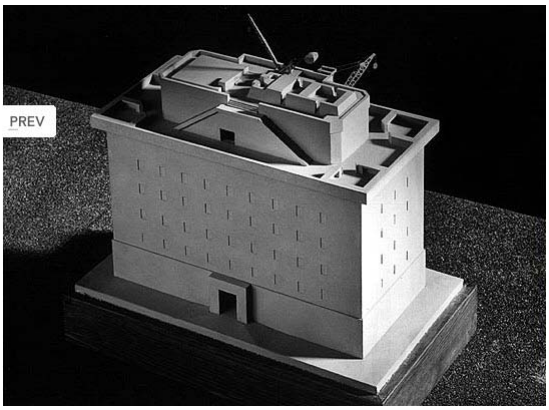

Figure 11: Humboldthain L tower model
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

[16] Wolfgang Hauer Wald, "Air Defense in Berlin and at Leuna 1944," *SeniorenNet Hamburg, Against Forgetting.* (2001), http://www.seniorennethamburg.de/zeitzeugen/vergessen/english/waldbauer1_eng.htm (accessed June 2008).
[17] Gustave H. Roosen, "As Luftwaffenhelfter upon the Flaktower VI in Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg," *SeniorenNet Hamburg, Against Forgetting.* (April 30, 2002), http://www.gustave-roosen.de/hamburg-e.htm (accessed June 2008).

While the flak towers remained relatively unscathed by any wartime attacks, they did little more to protect Berlin than smaller, more traditional anti-aircraft bunkers.[18] All towers in Berlin took direct bomb hits without suffering major damage, but their military defense did not meet the expectations of the Nazis. The flak towers' offensive prowess was discredited by failing to take down any ally aircraft during the war. In addition to failing this major role, the flak towers were also unable to provide much protection for the city in terms of advancing troops on foot. Not only did large portions of Berlin suffer from air attacks, the flak towers were unable to keep the Soviets from advancing into the city and capturing the Reichstag on April 30, 1945 during the Battle of Berlin. A significant reason for the military failure of the flak towers can be attributed to their design. Due to their multi-purpose wartime tasks and Hitler's post-war plans for the flak towers, they were considerably larger than they needed to be to accomplish military goals. It has been determined that with the amount of money and materials used for the construction of Berlin's flak towers, nearly ten times as many smaller and more traditional towers could have been erected.[19] So large, static and symbolic, the flak towers were an easy target for the Allies. The range of their mounted guns could never change to accommodate the need to attack advancing troops and aircrafts, also affecting performance. Also, the guns and military personnel on the roofs were largely exposed and inadequately protected. Despite the fact that the towers had no reason to be as large as they were, Hitler simply could not let the opportunity slip by to design a building with symbolism.

Hitler seized the opportunity and designed the necessary war structures in the chosen national architectural style. The towers were to instill a sense of safety in Berliners, but they also were to portray German superiority. Granite tablets bearing the names of German aviation heroes adorned the towers and were design features meant for the post-war life of the towers. The architectural style alone carried the Nazi propaganda, but Hitler's post-war dreams for the flak towers are truly representative of his and the

[18] Bauer, 12.
[19] Ibid.

party's megalomaniac vision. The towers were an integral feature in Hitler's plan for Germania and were to be ostentatious symbols of the Third Reich's technological and military superiority not only during the war, but also after the war. After winning World War II, the towers were to be clad in black marble and to serve as the largest monuments to the Third Reich. In addition to serving as giant monuments, the towers were also to be converted into housing. The steel windows incorporated into the flak towers' design are purely for post-war reasons, as windows serve no military purpose for flak towers and bunkers. While the towers were constructed using more money and more material than necessary in order to create permanent monuments to the Third Reich, their military effectiveness suffered. Though they were considered failures as wartime military structures, they were key to the survival of thousands of Berliners.

Figure 12: Model for Hamburg tower after war
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Fortunately for the citizens of Berlin, the RAF slowly expanded their air attacks, allowing the city to prepare for when they finally were bombed. In preparation, Goebbels

had ordered the evacuation of all children and mothers out of Berlin. This not only saved a large portion of the population, but it also freed many schools to be used for wartime purposes.[20] By the time the RAF began attacking the capital regularly, the flak towers were finished. Termed the "safest coffins in the world," the towers were meant to house 8000 people during an attack, but it is estimated that up to 30,000 people took shelter in the Zoo tower during some air raids.[21] In the event of an attack, a siren would ring alerting Berliners to take shelter in the nearest bunker. One survivor, Barbel Becker, who found shelter in the Humboldthain tower, remembers the sense of urgency and panic in getting to the tower, "I always had my stuff all neatly stacked on a chair, because if an alarm came, I had to quickly get dressed...It was like a mass migration, Mom pushed the stroller with my little sister and said to me not to stumble and fall or then I would be trampled."[22] People would rush to the tower with their emergency baggage and usually a folding chair, since only benches were provided within the tower, and enter through the towers' one entrance. Once inside, the civilians filled up the ground floor and the spiral staircases, and in some instances took up the first three floors. Sixteen-year-old flakhilfer Horst Kesner, who worked at the Zoo tower, remembers, "People were crammed in every room and in every section. They crowded into the passages so that we had to step over them as the slept on the floor. In the morning, when the raid was over, it took hours to get everyone out."[23] Wolfgang Wald even remembers high-ranking officers hurrying into the tower to seek safety.[24] While waiting out the attack, people were unable to hear what was going on outside and could hardly feel the tower shake when it had been hit. While the conditions inside the towers were cramped, people were well fed. Kesner enjoyed the task of unloading the food, "because it was so much better than our own rations, we naturally organized some of it for ourselves."[25] Much of the food that was given to the

[20] Martin Middlebrook, "Berlin: The Target City," *War and Game.* (January 6, 2009), http://warandgame.wordpress.com/2009/01/06/berlin-the-city-target/ (accessed February 2009).
[21] Foedrowitz 6.
[22] Barbel Becker, "Voelkerwanderung zum Humboldthain," *Berlin Unterwelten e.V.,* (1939), http://berliner-unterwelten.de/voelkerwanderung-zum-humboldthain.557.0.html (accessed June 2008).
[23] Middlebrook, http://warandgame.wordpress.com/2009/01/06/berlin-the-city-target/.
[24] Wald, http://www.seniorennethamburg.de/zeitzeugen/vergessen/english/waldbauer1_eng.htm.
[25] Middlebrook, http://warandgame.wordpress.com/2009/01/06/berlin-the-city-target/.

people inside the tower was better than what they were getting outside the tower, as Kesner remembers, “It was good for the people in the bunker; the good food satisfied them and the walls were so thick that they could not hear the bombs outside.”[26] For the people who took shelter in the towers, they were grateful for their existence. Their memories of the towers though would not be universally felt, as their experiences differed from those who were subjected to oppression in the tower.

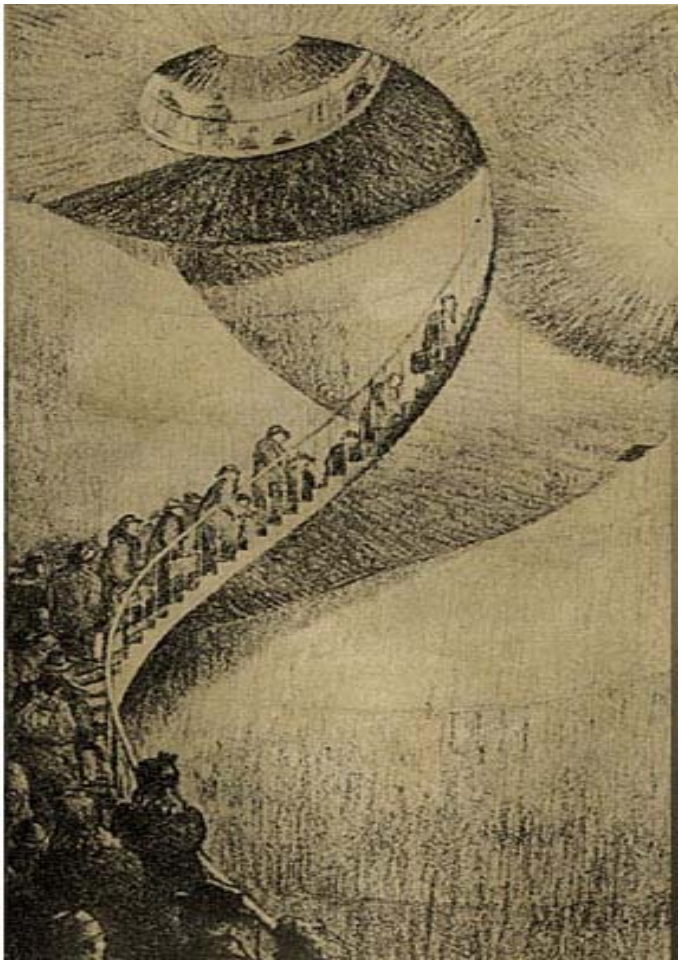

Figure 13: Drawing of spiral staircase by civilian who took shelter in a flak tower
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

[26] Ibid.

Figure 14: Migration to flak tower
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

The towers represented a number of different aspects of the war to a number of different people. To those who found shelter within the towers, they were safe havens, to those who were forced or conscripted to build or work in the tower, they stood as just another example of Nazi oppression. The mere architecture of the towers also represented Nazi oppression and propaganda to some, while to others they were purely just military in function. Because there was no one communal and shared experience at the towers, they represented and still represent very different lessons and meanings important in the history of Berlin, Germany and World War II. Memory was selective after the war though and therefore only some of these meanings stuck, the majority of them negative. The towers survived the war and immediately emerged as monumental reminders of Hitler's megalomania and oppression, ultimately forcing Berliners to erase of all the towers' wartime meanings and forget about them for the next five decades.

Evolving in the consciousness of Berliners from toxic Nazi monuments to monumental ruins unworthy of preservation during the five decades after the war, the lessons and stories of the towers would remain untold until the 21st century. At that time the towers would finally be able to tell their stories, one of wartime events and also one of Berlin's handling of Nazi-associated structures after the war.

Chapter Three: Berlin After the War

The Allies declared victory in Europe on May 8, 1945, six days after the fall of Berlin. 11 million people had died in concentration camps; 50 million soldiers and civilians perished in the war, 600,000 of whom died in bombings of German cities; 400 million cubic meters of rubble was scattered across German cities, and 13 million people found themselves homeless at the end of the war.[27] Despite such utter destruction of Germany and its cities, some Nazi relics survived the war, forcing the Allies and Germans to deal with these tangible remains. This was an opportunity for the Allies and the yet to be formed governments of East and West Berlin to manipulate history and memory in deciding how to rebuild, what to destroy and what to preserve. In a country conscious of historic preservation and the meanings attached to buildings, everyone concerned was questioning whether references to the Nazi past found in buildings should exist. Politics obviously factored into the decisions made by the Allies and the governments of East and West Berlin, and differences between how both governments handled the Nazi question evolved. Generally though the fate of Nazi-associated structures; considered as places where oppression was planned and/or occurred and Nazi-built structures, can generally be categorized as having fallen into one of the following three fates: normalization/denazification, forgetting/ignoring, or elimination.[28] Regardless of what treatment was taken though, the goal of all three was the suppression of the Nazi era from the site.

Both the German and Berlin landscapes were embedded with Nazi-associated structures and buildings of varying degrees of toxicity. Relics ranged from the innocuous, like the Autobahn and industrial factories, to the nefarious, Hitler's bunker. In grappling with questions of memory and struggling to house the homeless, government offices and people alike, both East and West Berlin reused buildings rather than destroying them, though East Berliners were more open to confronting the recent Nazi

[27] Koshar, 200.
[28] Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 169-172.

past than their Western counterparts. West Berliners were more apt to construct new buildings rather than determine if a building could be reconstructed. Constructing new buildings was seen by West Berliners as a way of reconnecting to Germany's better history, practically skipping over the twelve years of National Socialist rule.[29] Both West and East Berlin though took great measures to normalize, or denazify, the buildings they reused.

While the Allies and East and West Berliners would have preferred to not reuse Nazi buildings, there was a critical shortage of intact buildings and while it seemed wrong to occupy them, it seemed even more inappropriate to destroy them when people were without offices and homes. In order to reuse these tainted building, they had to be "disinfected."[30] Involved in the process of disinfection was the removal of anything that recalled the building's origins; usually swastikas, inscriptions, eagles and paintings within the building. In denazifying and reassigning these buildings, no mention was made of their recent Nazi pasts. In Berlin many buildings met this fate. The highest profile cases include the reuse of the former Reichsbank, Reich Aviation Ministry and Tempelhof Airport. In 1949 East Berlin moved their Finance Ministry into the former Reichsbank and in 1959 the Central Committee of the Communist Party moved into the building, adding another layer of contentiousness to the building for Berliners to deal with upon reunification. The former Reich Aviation Ministry was used by various East German government ministries throughout the post-war era and the United States military occupied Tempelhof Airport, intended by Hitler to be the gateway to Europe and to play an integral role in the creation of Germania, after the war to circumvent East German blockades. In lower profile cases, Hitler Youth houses were converted into youth recreation centers and barracks and forced labor camps were reassigned as emergency housing and shops.[31] While significant in meaning, removing these Nazi traces could only mute the past to an extent. The monumental architecture and design of many of

[29] Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts*, 200-229.
[30] Michael Z. Wise, *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 90.
[31] Donath, 15.

these buildings gave away provenance despite buildings having lost their Nazi ornamentation. The Naziness of these buildings' histories would continue to linger.

Another way Berliners handled the remaining Nazi-associated structures and places was simply by ignoring them. By doing so they were attempting to ignore the events of the last twelve years in hopes of erasing the memory of them. Kenneth Foote in *Shadowed Ground* describes ignored places in terms of visibility. In Berlin, by ignoring these sites, its citizens were making them invisible. Foote describes "invisible" sites as places of unresolved meaning and conflicting memory.[32] Such is the case with these Nazi-associated sites in Berlin. Unlike many of the places that Berliners normalized, the places of ignoring were not usually buildings, but rather sites. One example is the empty fields created by wartime bombing and demolition work in preparation for Germania's monumental north-south axis near the Reichstag and today's Potsdamer Platz. These fields remained desolate after the war and remain so to this day, an oddity for such a construction-crazed city. While recently planners have debated the cultural meanings of empty spaces in cities, a "geography of emptiness," none of their theories have properly discussed the vast meanings and memories associated with empty spaces created during the Third Reich.[33] Particularly in East Berlin, many Nazi sites fell into disrepair due to active neglect, including Hitler's Bunker. Unsure of what to do with the bunker immediately after the war, the Soviets ignored it. In 1948 they finally closed the bunker and buried it for good, making its location the best-kept secret in all of Berlin. The exact location of the bunker, in which Hitler committed suicide a few days before the surrender of Berlin, remained a mystery until the reunification of Germany in 1990, when its discovering caused a renewed sense of embarrassment and guilt.

Though most buildings were normalized by both the Allies and Berliners, some Nazi structures were considered too toxic to remain visible. For that reason these sites

[32] Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 293.
[33] Koshar, *From Monuments To Traces*,172.

needed erasing from the landscape and with them memories of their histories. The most famous of these cases was the Reichs Chancellery. The first major Nazi building in Berlin, built in 1938, its intentional demolition in 1948 symbolized the defeat of Hitler and National Socialism. Many Nazi-associated buildings were "assessed" as too damaged after the war to be repaired and therefore demolished. Such was the case of the SS and Gestapo headquarters on Prinz-Albrecht Strasse, today part of the Topography of Terror. Many more unassuming buildings were also determined by the Allies to be too symbolic of Nazism and therefore were to meet the wrecking ball. The flak towers were on this list of symbolic structures.

The Allied Control Council issued a number of proclamations, laws and directives in December 1945 that outlined plans to denazify and demilitarize Germany. One directive, Directive No. 22, the Clearance of Minefields and Destruction of Military Installations, stated that all buildings and structures considered crucial to the German war cause must be destroyed. On the list of structures to be disposed of were all three of Berlin's flak towers.[34] Despite having been military failures, the Allies believed the flak towers were representative of the oppression of the Third Reich and accepted the Nazi symbolism Hitler had hoped they would convey.

Berlin was divided into four sectors in 1945, controlled by the Soviets, Americans, British and French, and all but the Americans had a flak tower in their sector. The Allies were only semi-successful in disposing of the flak towers, with only the British capable of completely destroying the Zoo tower. The Germans surrendered the Zoo tower to the Soviets on May 2, 1945. Upon surrender a nearby hospital moved patients into the concrete mass and many of the city's homeless took refuge inside the bunker. It was not until the British ordered the tower evacuated and demolished in April 1947 that it was completely uninhabited. On June 28, 1947 the British attempted to blow up both L and G towers with fifty pounds of TNT. After two failed attempts and German

[34] Foedrowitz, 10.

cheers of pride for such a well built structure, they drilled holes into the walls with oxygen torches and spent another four months in preparation for a third attempt. On July 30, 1948 both towers finally came down. In doing so, some animals at the Berlin Zoo were killed and some of its buildings were damaged. At a cost of four million Marks, the rubble from the tower's destruction, 412,000 cubic meters, was trucked away and used for both the construction of subway lines and roads.[35] It was not until 1969 though when the last remains of the foundation were removed. Today there are no traces that a flak tower once stood in Berlin's Tiergarten. No concrete remains, no elevation change, no plaques and no explanation in Berlin Zoo literature indicate that now where the zoo's bird preserve and hippopotamus enclosure sit once was Berlin's first flak tower.

The Soviets and French encountered more problems when it came to destroying the Friedrichshain and Humboldthain towers. Both towers surrendered in May 1945, but neither tower was completely removed from Berlin's landscape. In attempting to erase the flak towers from Berlin's cityscape, neither the Soviets nor the French were able to demolish the concrete giants with explosives, so instead of destroying them, they "erased" them by covering them with rubble and debris. The results were two manmade hills in a rather flat city. From 1947 to 1950, the Soviets piled rubble and ruins from not only the Friedrichshain flak tower, but from nearby buildings, in and on the ruin creating a "mountain of rubble," termed "Mount Klamott. The 79 m high hill, in Friedrichshain Volkspark, still conceals the partially intact remains of the flak tower and exposes only a sliver of the western wall of the G tower. In the northwest district of Wedding, the French were limited to only sixteen tons of dynamite in their attempts at blowing up the Humboldthain tower. Because of an existing rail line that was to be extended near the tower, the French were only able to demolish the L tower in December 1947 and the two southern gun platforms of the G tower in 1948. Two more attempts at taking the tower down were unsuccessful and so the 1.6 cubic meters of rubble produced by the failed attempts were piled in and around the tower's base to create an artificial hill. Today the

[35] Foedrowitz, 9.

Humboldthain tower is the most visible of Berlin's three towers, with its north face fully exposed.

Figure 15: Humboldthain G tower after attempts at destroying in 1948
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Figure 16: Successful destruction of Humboldthain L tower, 1947
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Chapter Four: Sites of Memory

The act of historic preservation had strong roots in Germany, going back to the early 18th century. Both Johann Goethe and Georg Dehio, a German art historian, wrote of the significant role buildings, sites and monuments played in national life. Goethe addressed the issue in 1772 with "On German Architecture" and Dehio produced a five-volume survey of German monuments in1912 in which he states, "We conserve a monument not because we consider it beautiful, but because it is a piece of our national life. To protect monuments is not to pursue pleasure, but to practice piety."[36] Such sentiments resonated with much of the German population, not only intellectuals. Especially in the two decades before World War I, historic preservation was a significant public activity and in 1899 the important preservation journal, Monument Preservation was first published. Having for so long connected the built environment with memory and identity, the German population was left with a curious situation when after the war their landscape was blemished with sites of painful memories.

The initial reaction to the question of how to handle sites of painful memory is to remove and erase them. Why is this the case? Because as Leland Roth writes, "On a deep psychological level, our architecture is our built memory; it is a legacy, both the acclaimed architecture and the anonymous building. When we remove any part of it, we erase part of that memory, performing an incremental cultural lobotomy."[37] Both individual and collective memories attach themselves to material sites, whether in the form of architecture or simply a tree. If these sites evoke painful memories the natural instinct is to remove them. As Brian Ladd explains, "memories often cleave to the physical settings of events. That is why buildings and places have so many stories to tell.

[36] Koshar, *From Monuments To Traces*, 32.
[37] Leland Roth, *Understanding Architecture: Its Elements, History and Meaning* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), 136.

They give form to a city's history and identity."[38] Germans speak of Erinnerungslandschaft, or "memory landscapes," that include anything from architectural landmarks, historic sites, street names and natural landscapes, and how the memories associated with such landscapes determine how they are treated in terms of preservation, acknowledgement and interpretation.[39] It is these exact treatments though that form and create a collective identity. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs wrote, "we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is preserved in our physical surroundings."[40] By examining the flak towers as part of the "memory landscape" or simply as "sites of memory," one attempts to do just that. In doing so, one examines how these structures fit within Berlin's place of memory and how they have been made visible or invisible within the city over the years. Such examination of the handling and interpretation of the Flak towers will help shed light on how Berlin has confronted its Nazi past.

Flak Towers as Sites of Memory

The Allies initially decided for Berliners how the flak towers were to be remembered, and that was by not remembering them at all. After the war they immediately accepted the meaning that Hitler had imparted on the flak towers; that they were monumental symbols of the Third Reich. Despite their condition and ability to house people, the Allies wanted them erased from the landscape. Of the three towers built in Berlin, its citizens were only left with the hidden remains of the Friedrichshain towers and the exposed remains of the Humboldthain G tower. The erasure of the Zoo towers and the near-erasure of the Friedrichshain towers from the landscape left Berliners with the easy task of not having to determine how they were to be handled. The only tower left in question was the Humboldthain tower.

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[38] Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.
[39] Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces,* 9.
[40] Paul B. Jaskot and Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "Introduction: Urban Space and the Nazi Past in Postwar Germany," in *Beyond Berlin,* ed. Gavriel D. Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 4.

The last attempt by the French at demolishing the Humboldthain tower was in 1948 and in 1950, one year after formation of the two German states, West Berlin's Garden and Building Department began work on planting vegetation on the "mountain" that had been created by the rubble covering the tower. The district had given up trying to demolish the tower and instead used the opportunity to enhance the park while covering up a period of its history. The result was the creation of "Humboldt-85 Hoehe," or Grosse Bunkerberg, the vegetated 78-meter high "mountain" in the northern corner of Humboldthain Volkspark. Until 2001 it pretty much remained as such, a green mound in the park whose history was left unmarked.

Figure 17: Aerial view after WWII, Humboldthain
Photo Credit: Landesarchiv Berlin

Figure 18: Current aerial of Humboldthain Volkspark Photo Credit: Google Maps

No attempts at commemorating or interpreting the Humboldthain tower's past were made by anyone in the four decades following the war. This is not to say that the tower was completely ignored, but rather only its history was ignored. The Garden and Building Department and its head, Gunther Rieck completely redesigned the park and incorporated the tower and its "mount" into the landscape design of the park in 1950. Though due to the redesign of 1950 and the construction of the towers, the post-1950 park looks nothing like Meyer's park upon its completion in 1876. Though the towers and war had completely changed the landscape of the municipal park, the district and Rieck were determined to return it back to a place of recreation. In the attempt to return the park to its earlier, untainted past, the district authorities were essentially avoiding confrontation with the park's Nazi past.

Figure 19: Humboldthain Volkspark in 1950s with flak tower in background
Photo Credit: Berlin Street Media

As part of the revival of the park, the tower "mounts" were planted with vegetation to blend into the park seamlessly. Meant as place for recreation, a toboggan run that had originally been in the park was returned in Rieck's redesign and placed on the "mount" created by the hidden L tower.[41] Also in 1950, the German Alpine Society started using the exposed north face of the tower for climbing practice.[42] As recreational aspects, the tower and resultant mounts were successful additions to the park, but these uses did nothing but suppress the memories and history that were attached to the tower. The only indication to what was hidden underneath the earth were the names given to the hills, Grosse and Kleine Bunkerberg. The G tower would be used for other non-recreational purposes in the years to come, but even though these would be more symbolic than recreational, the tower's history was still made invisible.

In 1950 the district of Wedding, whose ownership the tower belongs to, began placing a Christmas tree on the tower's top. The large tree was meant to be seen by both sets of citizens of the recently divided city.[43] After the construction of the Berlin Wall in

[41] "Humboldthain," *Brunnenstrasse.* http://www.brunnenstrasse.de/_buch/12.shtml, (accessed January 2009).
[42] Foedrowitz, 11.
[43] Henry Gidom, email message to author, May 21, 2008.

1961, the district used the top of the tower for the annual Mahnfeuer (memorial fire) on the evening before June 17. The fires, occurring across the country, were meant to send a message of unity to the once united country and hope for a future united country.[44] The decision to place both the Christmas tree and Mahnfeuer on the Humboldthain Tower was strictly for practicality. The height of the tower allowed West and East Berliners to see both the tree and fire, and once the Wall was built and the city physically divided, the fires were easily seen by those on the other side of the Wall in East Berlin, making the message of unity even more striking.

As early as 1953, the Mayor of West Berlin, Walther Schreiber wanted to use the tower for the site of Reg Butler's winning design from "the most important Western sculpture competition of the post-war period," 'Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner.'[45] Controversy and scandal surrounded the competition, which was backed by money from the CIA and said to be a counter to the Soviet monument built in Treptow Park, and the sculpture was never created.[46] In 1967 though, the site of the tower was again chosen for the placement a sculpture. The illuminated 11 m tall aluminum sculpture by Arnold Schatz, *Reunification,* depicts the loss of German unity with two sharp needles and was a gift to West Berlin's mayor Willy Brandt. The sculpture's inauguration ceremony took place on August 13, 1967 and no speech mentioned the history of the site, but the reason why the site was chosen for the sculpture was discussed. In promoting reunification, the hope was that the sculpture, which could be seen by both East and West Berliners, would encourage such action. At the ceremony the tower received its first plaque. The plaque did not commemorate the tower's history but only identified the meaning of the sculpture.[47] The tower seemingly took on the role of promoter of unity due to its height. While it was used symbolically as a platform for

[44] Godehard Janzing, "National division as a formal problem in West German public sculpture: memorials to German unity in Muenster and Berlin," in *Figuration/Abstraction,* ed. Charlotte Benton (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 130.
[45] Ibid., 145.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

German unity by the district of Wedding, no attempts at making the history of the tower visible were undertaken.

Figure 20: "Monument to German Unity" plaque
Photo Credit: Haddid Zend, Flickr

Figure 21: *Reunification sculpture*
Author's photograph

Though it appeared by the lack of recognition given by the community that the flak tower's Nazi past had been suppressed to the point of erasure from memory, this was not exactly true. While collectively the community had been able to ignore the tower's tarnished beginnings and continue to enjoy the park, the Wedding district authorities had never stopped considering complete demolition of the concrete structure. Though a fence originally surrounded the tower after the war, nothing had kept the curious from exploring the ruin. The overall danger the ruin posed to those exploring the tower's interior led the district to decide to completely remove the tower from the landscape. If the district was unsure of its decision they had no doubts when a rumor circulating in the press in the 1970s said that the tower was a meeting point for an obscure Nazi group.[48] The final straw came in 1982 when a 36-year-old man fell to his death while exploring inside the tower. Having sat quiet for so long, the death and danger along with the tower's past proved too loud for the district to ignore. Authorities finally planned to erase the tower for good. Though the choice to eliminate the tower from the built

[48] Gidom, email.

environment in the 1980s was not purely due to its Nazi past, it did nothing to affect the case for preservation one way or the other; the tower's Nazi association was seen as neither a reason to preserve nor a reason to destroy it. An estimated cost of twenty million Deutsch Marks to totally remove the tower was reason enough for the district to secure the tower though. For three million Deutsch Marks in 1990 the district instead created a secure viewing platform on the tower's roof, blocked off all entrances into the tower and created an official climbing wall on the tower's north face. Also, the district erected the first official marking of the tower's history with the placement of a plaque on its northern wall. Though light on content and with no mention of any of the tower's contentious past, the plaque was the first step in recognizing and presenting the tower's history. Though the district had spent the money to secure the tower, they still had very little interest in its preservation, allowing graffiti and biological growth to cover the structure. They had only done enough so that the tower would be safe, but nothing more. In 1995 in conjunction with the fiftieth year commemoration of the surrender of the tower, the Heimatmuseum Wedding took the first step in showcasing the history of the Humboldthain tower with its "Bunkerberg: Vom Flakturm zur Humboldthoehe" exhibit that ran until 1996. They also published a small series examining the history of the tower showing architectural sketches, plans and testimonies from people who sought refuge and from those working in the tower. This was the first major action that helped bring the tower history into visibility, if only at the local level. In only a few more years the tower would be brought onto a much more publicized and visible stage.

Figure 22: Platform on Humboldthain tower
Author's photograph

Figure 23: Plaque on Humboldthain tower
Author's photograph

The path to visibility for the tower loosely follows that of other Nazi and World War II-associated structures in Berlin and Germany at large. Silence about the Nazi past lasted from the end of the war until well into the 1960s. The 1950s and 1960s saw Germans focusing on the future rather than their past, therefore ineffectively dealing with the twelve years of National Socialism. By the 1970s though the younger generation, born just after the war, began to develop a new identity, one based on "neighborhood and region."[49] This new identity awoke the feelings of value given to physical reminders of Germany's past that had been put to sleep for the past twenty years. Germans began to recognize all eras in their country's past, including the Nazi era. Where little comment was given to relics from the Third Reich in the twenty years after the end of the war, the 1970s saw the first real discussions of the meanings of the physical reminders from that era. Both East and West governments began building monuments, preserving architecture and establishing and upgrading museums more thoroughly than the previous decades. 1971 even saw the successful exhibit "Questions for German History," house in the reconstructed Reichstag.[50] It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s with the fall of the Wall and reunification that Germans really started to accept the events of the Nazi era and the guilt associated with those events. Germany became a "showcase for urban vergangenheitsbewaltingung," meaning to struggle with coming to terms with a

[49] Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts*, 232.
[50] Ibid. 296.

painful past, and even started marketing certain sites of memory.[51] This is not to say that Germans readily and eagerly accepted and embraced this history, as many debates about the reuse of Nazi-associated buildings would occur, but just that they were able to admit that the events had taken place and they no longer felt it necessary to completely ignore them.

In terms of Berlin's flak towers becoming "visible" once again, their path to recognition came about more slowly, less critically and after the recognition of more contentious sites. The years of slow recognition of the Nazi past leading up to 2001 paved the way for the recognition of the present-day disregarded tower that at one time had been seen as toxic. After Berliners had come to terms with their Nazi past and dealt with the more contentious structures left in their landscape, what did remain from the Nazi era was practically seen as not only nontoxic, but also unworthy of preservation. That is until an association interested in interpreting the towers' histories stepped into the picture. In 1997 an association was created by ten people in Berlin whose interest was the "underworld," meaning bunkers, tunnels, subways, vaults, and other sites and structures. Though not only interested in sites associated with both the Nazi and Communist eras, much of their work focused on these sites. At this time, the late 1990s, Nazi history was televised often and to an audience larger than ever before, allowing the association to work on these sites with less criticism than ever before. The Berliner Unterwelten e.V.'s (Berlin Underworld Association, Society for the Exploration and Documentation of Subterranean Architecture) objective was and continues to be simple; to debunk the myths that surround these places through the participation in conservation, surveying and documenting underground structures, education and making these facilities available to the public.[52] The association aims to tell what they believe to be an important aspect of German history rarely told in history classes; that of the less-well-known aspects of World War II, including German suffering. The association opened a

[51] Jaskot and Rosenfeld, 10-15.
[52] "Aus dem Vereinsleben," *Berliner Unterwelten e.V.*, http://berliner-unterwelten.de/aus-dem-vereinsleben.684.0.html (accessed January 2009).

permanent exhibit in 1998 at the U Bahnhof station of Gesundbrunnen in the district of Wedding and organized its first guided tour to the public in 1999. In 2001, association Chairman and founding member Dietmar Arnold approached the Wedding district authorities about opening up the flak tower in Humboldthain Volkspark to the public. Arnold believed the tower could tell the little-known story of ordinary Germans in the war who often suffered at the hands of their own and was worth preserving and recognizing. They proposed to refurbish the bunker complex at their own expense and use it for exhibition and educational purposes. The association's previous activities had proved economically beneficial to the district and had been handled responsibly, therefore they saw no reason to prevent the association from entering the tower. In the summer of 2001 the association and the district of Wedding signed a "special use" contract, or a lease for the tower and in October of that year the association began work inside the tower.

By April 2004 the Berlin Underworld Association offered its first tours inside the Humboldthain flak tower. After nearly 8000 hours of work and the removal of 1400 cubic meters of rubble from the interior, the tours were met with great reviews. The association's work focused on clearing the rubble and safely securing the tower for visitors. Beams, ceilings, electricity and stair railings were all installed or restored. In addition to securing the tower, the association had to make sure the large bat population that had established itself inside the tower over the years was not disturbed, meaning work could not occur in the winter months. Working with the Berlin Species Protection Officer, the association built special walls and boxes for hibernation and created small openings in the outer wall for access in and out of the tower. In order to not disturb the bat population, the association is only able to offer tours from April to October.

The guided tours, which take visitors to the two floors that the association has secured, provide views into the depths of the tower and offer a thorough history and assessment of the preservation work done to date and work to be done in the future. The

association has also created an exhibit within the tower with architectural sketches, historic photographs and items left behind in the tower at the end of the war. The association also uses the tower interior for talks and readings of diaries and memoirs from the war. The entire history of the tower, Nazi-association and German suffering, is outlined by both the tour guide and the exhibit. The association does not present a lopsided history in favor of the tower's Nazi symbolism, German suffering or the tower's non-contentious history such as daily activities for those who took shelter within the tower. The symbolism behind the architecture and Hitler's plan for its conversion into a monument to the Third Reich receives as much coverage as stories from survivors of the air raids and stories of those who were born in the bunker, Bunker Babies. For the first time since the end of the war, the flak tower's true and entire identity is visible. The aim of the association and its preservation and interpretation work on sensitive structures like the flak tower has been for educational and scientific reasons, and for that reason their work has been praised by officials and politicians. After seeing the association's work on the Humboldthain tower, in fall 2004 the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzburg allowed a group of members access into the Friedrichshain tower. In 2005 the group, along with a documentary film crew dug their way in and around the interior of the tower to find it in near better condition than when they first entered the Humboldthain tower. The association continues to work on the tower, but as of yet has no plans to offer tours.

Figure 24: Work on spiral staircase in Humboldthain tower
Photo Credit: Oliver Mann

Figure 25: Collapsed interior wall in Humboldthain tower
Photo Credit: Oliver Mann

The association plans to continue clearing out rubble within the Humboldthain tower and securing and preserving what still remains in the hopes of extending their tours of the interior. In regards to preserving and protecting both the Humboldthain and Friedrichshain towers, their current state, with ownership held by their respective districts and lease of the Humboldthain tower by the association are perfectly adequate. While neither have any official level of government landmark designation, the work the association has done has probably done more to attract attention to the towers' history than any official designation would have. As the towers currently are, with one open to the public and one still covered by earth, the public is able to see and understand not only the wartime era, post-war era and present day situation of the towers. Though there is no official designation of the towers, the association's efforts have been more than sufficient in preserving and interpreting the towers. Though Berlin is not opposed to listing Nazi-associated structures as official Denkmale (monuments), the 1936 Olympic Stadium is listed as such as is the weed-covered Schwerbelastungskorper, a 12,650 ton concrete cylinder built to test the load capacity of the ground on which Hitler's giant hall was to be built, and the Humboldthain tower certainly is historic, designation would do little more than possibly add a plaque to the tower. Designation does not necessarily protect a site from demolition and while it might possibly draw more attention to the tower and graffiti might be stopped for a short time, no consequential changes would likely occur. Also,

the current state of the towers, earth and graffiti covered are part of the towers' histories and help tell the story of Berlin's confrontation with its Nazi past. Neither tower needs be fully excavated, cleaned of graffiti, or turned into a strictly "historic" site for its history to be told. In fact, the earth, the recreation and graffiti all represent significant stages in the towers' histories, and by removing earth or restricting recreation, one is removing an integral part of the towers. They are no longer simply Nazi structures; over time they have incorporated other roles that are equally important in their history and these newer roles also help to tell the history of how Nazi-associated structures have been handled in Berlin.

The response to the reopening of the Humboldthain tower has been enthusiastic among officials and visitors alike and no serious objections were posed to the association in doing so. Concern was raised over whether the story of German suffering during the war was an appropriate topic for discussion and exhibit, but since that was part of the tower's history, the Berlin Underworld Association felt it had to be told. While the exhibit does discuss German suffering it does not deny Germany's role as aggressor in World War II and does not try to detract from the suffering of others inflicted by Germans. The ease of opening of the Humboldthain tower stands in stark contrast to the debates surrounding the reuse of other Nazi-associated structures in Berlin and the controversy flak towers pose to Vienna.

Berlin's Nazi Relics

The biggest debates surrounding how best to handle the Nazi-associated structures in Berlin took place in the early 1990s when the decision to move the German capital from Bonn to Berlin occurred. Buildings constructed by the Nazis that had survived the war and the immediate aftermath saw various uses throughout the four decades following the war. All of these uses though made sure to hide the Nazi association. With the government move to Berlin, buildings were needed and so the question arose as to whether or not a building's Nazi past disqualified it from housing German government

offices. Strong support in favor of reuse as well as strong support in favor of avoiding reuse and even destruction arose. The most heated opposition, headed by ministry leaders surrounded the former Reich Aviation Ministry's reuse as the Finance Ministry, the Labor Ministry's move into the former Nazi Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and especially the Foreign Ministry's move into the doubly tainted former Reichsbank and form East German Communist Party headquarters. Originally, Parliament had approved the demolition of these buildings in 1992. The government feared that by reusing the buildings they would raise suspicion and resentment within the rest of Europe. Berlin urban planner Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, a leading voice in the opposition of the reuse of the buildings, felt it would have been wrong to reoccupy the buildings and "cover up the original function with an apparent neutrality."[53] By 1994 though a recession and money constraints forced a reevaluation of the reuse of the Nazi buildings and the decision was made to reoccupy them. The decision was applauded by many historians and politicians alike. Wolfgang Keilholz, the architect responsible for the renovation of the former Aviation Ministry echoed what many of the supporters thought and felt, "The guilt is born by people, but today one must respect that guilt emanated from this building. The user who will now occupy this building must know that. And by occupying such a building one takes on an obligation, one that is greater than if one were just to tear down the building."[54] In reoccupying many of these buildings, renovations and additions did take place, but many of the architects working on them all felt that their goal was not to disinfect the buildings, but rather show them off like a history book and respect the layers from each era of its past. Simply ignoring or destroying the Nazi layers or even entire buildings essentially would have represented that Germans were not yet ready to come to terms with their past, when in reality they had been working to get to this point for a while.

[53] Wise, 89.
[54] Ibid., 107.

Hamburg and Vienna: Flak Towers

In addition to the three towers built in Berlin, Hitler ordered the construction of towers in Bremen, Munich, Hamburg and Vienna. Only two of these cities actually saw the construction of these towers though, with Hamburg receiving two in 1941 and 1942 and Vienna receiving three in 1942. The design of the towers in all three cities varied slightly from one another and are categorized as Building Type I, Building Type II and Building Type III. All three Berlin towers and one Hamburg tower fall into the Type I category, one Hamburg tower and one Vienna tower are Type II and the remaining two towers in Vienna are Type III. In an attempt to lower costs and improve the military aspects of the towers, the volume of the remaining five towers outside Berlin were reduced and the designs simplified. Type II towers were in effect smaller versions of the Type I towers, and the Type III towers had essentially evolved into one massive concrete cylinder.

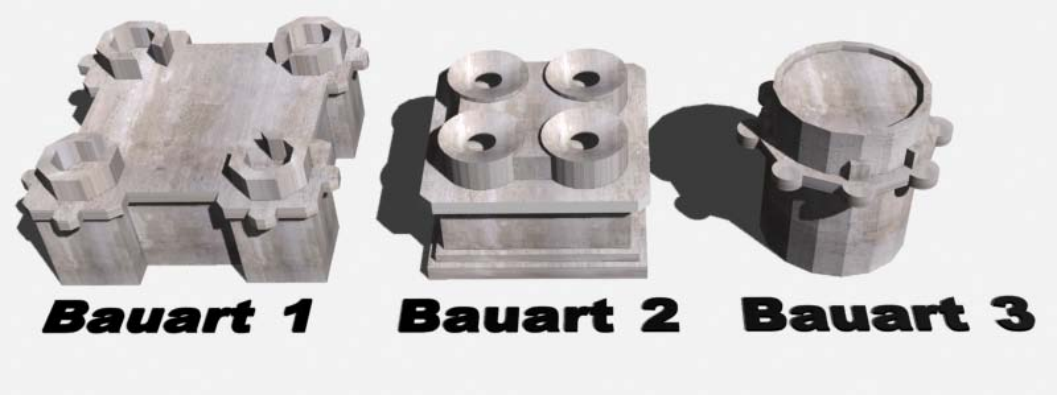

Figure 26: Evolution of the flak tower designs Photo Credit: Wikipedia

At the end of the war the towers in Hamburg were to be demolished along with the towers in Berlin, but after seeing the trouble it took to destroy the Berlin towers, the British only removed the smaller L towers and left the larger G towers intact. Not being in the center of Nazism, the British were less concerned with allowing the Hamburg towers to stay than they were with the towers in Berlin. Today, both G towers remain with what appears little controversy. The Wilhelmsburg tower was blown up inside and remains vacant, except for its population of pigeons and bats. The Heiliggeistfeld tower was used for various purposes after the war but has since been adaptively reused. The G

tower's interior has been completely renovated and its ground floor houses a music school and apartments occupy the upper floors.[55] There seems to be no controversy surrounding the use of the bunker as a school or apartments and it remains relatively obvious that the towers are relics from the Nazi era, though no official commemoration recognizes it.

Figure 27: Hamburg Heiliggeistfeld tower exterior today
Photo Credit: Etienne Raddeor

Figure 28: Hamburg Heiliggeistfeld interior
Photo Credit: Etienne Raddeor

[55] Foedrowitz, 8.

Figure 29: Hamburg Heiliggeistfelt interior
Photo Credit: Etienne Raddeor

The three sets of intact towers standing in Vienna have caused the most controversy. At the end of the war the towers were left to stand because Austria, not part of Germany was therefore not considered for demilitarization under the Potsdam Agreement. Surprisingly, all towers are protected by law as historic structures today, more than can be said about Berlin's towers, but in reality the towers have sat ignored by all levels of authority since the end of the war. Only briefly mentioned in guidebooks, city maps and tours, the flak towers do not exist as tourist attractions and are not considered part of "official" Vienna.[56] Since 1945 the towers have mostly remained ignored and locked by either the local or national government, the owners. In 1971 the Stiftskaserne L tower was converted into an aquarium and one of its exterior walls a climbing wall. The towers have also seen sporadic uses as storage space and the backdrop to open air movie festivals, but for the most part they have sat as silent relics to the Nazi past. More recently though various groups; students, historians, artists, have begun to call attention to the towers.

In 2006 the Arenbergpark L tower was used for an art show by university students. When entering the tower they found it to be exactly as it was left in 1945. Uniforms, clothes, toys, medical equipment, models of aircrafts and documents outlining

[56] Robin Stummer, "Secret History," *New Statesman*, July, 31, 2008, World Affairs, Europe section.

the day-to-day management of the forced labor army were discovered for the first time. Graffiti in French, Russian and Italian that had been left by the POWs used to build the tower was also discovered.[57] These discoveries awoke the memories of the forgotten Nazi era and began a discussion of what to do with the towers. The student art group wanted all the towers used for art and cultural events highlighting "historical awareness," but the city soon stepped in and forced the students out and fenced off the tower. Proposed uses since for the tower have been purely utilitarian and economical; parking garages, concert halls, offices. Such proposals lacking any historical reference anger the groups who want to see the history of the towers told. Flak tower historian Ute Bauer has said about them "In Vienna's historic center, these towers can be seen as surrealistic concrete architecture, but I'm not happy about detaching the war from the architecture. At least one of them has to be turned into a memorial. They have to remind us of the inhuman 'efficiency' the Nazis established."[58] The Austrian and Viennese authorities seemingly have been perfectly content with the years of flak tower ignorance. Possibly the fact that Austrians have not seen themselves as central to the Nazi aggression, but rather victims of it, they have not as readily and objectively discussed their role in the Nazi era as Germans and Berliners have. Slowly steps are being taken though and the Viennese government along with the Austrian Fund for Indemnification are supporting Bauer and her oral history research project on the towers. Despite their support though, they are not allowing Bauer into any of the towers. Until Vienna comes to terms with its past, then the towers will remain vacant and ignored and the tower in the biggest state of ruin, the Humboldthain Tower will remain the one and only recognized for its history.

[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Figure 30: Aquarium flak tower, Vienna
Photo Credit: Douglas Sprott, Flickr

Figure 31: Augarten tower, Vienna
Photo Credit: Ken Spiros, Flickr

Chapter Five: What Does It All Mean?

How did a Nazi-built structure in the capital of the Third Reich evolve from a symbol of Nazism, to becoming invisible in the city's memoryscape, to finally having its entire history recognized through the preservation and interpretation work of one association? Much can be learned by studying the Berlin flak towers, in regards to: Hitler, Nazism, World War II; preservation; the built environment and memories; and what this thesis set out to find, how Berlin has continually coped with its Nazi-built relics.

For many reasons the intervention by the Berlin Underworld Association and resulting preservation of the Humboldthain tower is important. While it was essentially forgotten before the association stepped into the picture, the tower now helps tell important parts of German history in a way no other structure can. From the flak towers one learns about architecture in the Third Reich and the imposing role Hitler wanted it to play. The use of prisoners of war by the Nazis is also another aspect in which the towers help shed light. The towers also help tell a story of survival of German citizens during the war and they also help tell the obvious story of wartime air attacks. Probably the most controversial aspect of World War II that the towers help tell is that of German suffering at the hand of other Germans. Though some might argue that the tower represents an unsavory period of German history and therefore should not be preserved, the fact is that the Nazi era did exist and simply because the events associated with that period are horrendous, by not preserving the tower the events will not disappear. One cannot choice what parts of history to remember and what parts to forget and usually there are many lessons to learn from the very periods we would like to forget. This is true of the flak towers. Simply because it sprung from the Nazi era does not mean it is unworthy of preservation. Also, a structure sitting ignored sometimes seems more toxic than it really is and allows rumors to swirl about. When the facts are presented to the public, little room is left for rumors and erroneous facts to spread. By preserving and interpreting the flak towers, the city and the association are saying that its history is

important and while not all events surrounding it are pleasant, there are lessons to be learned from it.

Where once officials might have feared that opening up any of the towers to the public would draw neo-Nazis to the site, the way the association handled the preservation and interpretation alleviated most fears. Probably the biggest concern with preserving a Nazi-associated structure like the flak tower is the question it raises about its importance. By preserving a Nazi-built structure and consequently telling a story of German suffering in World War II, is the association implying that the tower and its history is as important as other World War II sites, such as those where Jewish suffering occurred? The fact of the matter though is that importance is relative. Throughout Berlin, Germany and the world, sites, structures and buildings are being preserved, or their preservation is being fought for daily. These sites vary from simple houses to grand railway stations to entire cities. It is not just the size of these sites that is disparate, it is their stories and histories and lessons as well. An argument could be made to say any one is more important than the other, but simply by preserving one and not the other does not automatically make it so. Importance and significance is determined individually and by preserving a structure, history and facts are presented to a larger group of people who then get to determine individually its significance and where if belongs in the larger picture. By preserving the Humboldthain tower and interpreting its history, the association is not arguing that it is more or less important than other preserved or non-preserved Nazi-associated structures. The association is simply implying that the flak towers' history is important and that it helps tell a more complete story of World War II; it belongs in the larger picture. Not all historic structures can or will be preserved and the same is true of Nazi-associated structures in Berlin. There are a number of factors that account for the preservation of a structure, but simply because a site or structure is not preserved or its history interpreted, does not mean it is not significant to someone or that its history is inconsequential. The Humboldthain tower was fortunate enough to have an interested group willing to work on its preservation and interpretation so that its history could be conveyed to the public.

The Humboldthain flak tower proves that sites of memory evolve over time and that they do not become places on the map of memory simply on their own. The flak towers evolved in the consciousness of Berliners from associations of guilt and shame and caused them to want to hide and ignore them. With time and as Berliners came to terms with their past, the towers were not only no longer deemed toxic, but also their existence was not deemed worthy of preservation either. That is until the Berlin Underworld Association came into the picture. The simple fact that a structure is associated with Nazis does not make it contentious, nor does it make automatically recognized for its history. People are needed for structures to be collectively recognized rather than recognized by only a handful of individuals. These people, as Jennifer Jordan has termed them, are "memorial entrepreneurs."[59] Historic traces left in the landscape will not be memorialized or recognized simply because they are there; they need supporters willing to work for the recognition of the site. In addition to the well-known monuments to the Third Reich surviving today, a number of less-well known relics also survive but remain unmarked and unrecognized. The Berlin flak towers are probably the most widely known "ordinary" Nazi-associated structures in the city because of the Berlin Underworld Association. A number of wild concentration camps and forced labor camps remain in and around the city with little to no recognition and one of the major reasons for this is that they have no "memorial entrepreneur." This is not to say their history is not important in the larger history of World War II, but simply to say no one has stepped in to act as their memorial entrepreneurs.

What could be considered a toxic structure for one of a number of reasons, the Humboldthain flak tower proves that having an unsavory past does not necessarily make a structure "bad." When comparing the relatively objection-free opening of the Humboldthain tower to the objections, questions and concerns raised regarding other Nazi-associated structures in Berlin and the flak towers in Vienna, it becomes clear that there is more at work than simply the flak towers' Nazi origins. Hitler himself ordered

[59] Jordan, 2.

the construction of the towers and also played a large role in their design; the use of teenage boys and old men as gun controllers; the use of POWs and slave labor to build the towers and to clean up their wreckage; and the racial and ethnic exclusion of those who were not allowed entry into the tower are all reason enough for the flak towers to have remained contentious over the years. Because the tower has not remained contentious, it can be said that other circumstances and events associated with the tower have weakened the link between it and Nazism and that over time Berliners have come to see Nazi structures as part of their history.

While the Nazis and Allies both saw the tower as a monument to the Third Reich, Berliners also felt a sense of shame surrounding the flak towers after the war. These feelings were linked to the fact that the flak towers were monuments to the Third Reich and reminded Berliners of the atrocities their country had just committed. But also, guilt stemmed from the fact that German lives had suffered at the flak towers, too. Old men and teenage boys had been taken from their homes and thrown on top of the towers for slaughter. This guilt was different though and had to be hidden because it would have seemed inappropriate for Germans to think of themselves as victims. This guilt and shame led to the "invisibility" of the towers after the war. After the war until the 1980s and 1990s, expressing anything other than guilt and shame in regards to the Nazi era was simply unheard of. Even acts that would boost national pride, such as hosting the Olympics, were frowned upon for fear of how it would look to outsiders. Though Germans might have felt feelings other than guilt in regards to their Nazi past and nationality, the time had not yet come where it was acceptable to express them. In order for Berliners' memories of the tower to evolve away from painful and shameful, time was needed. Kenneth Foote explains that sites of painful memory can only be recognized once the community has come to terms with their past and a period of time, usually between 50 to 150 years is needed for this to occur, approximately how long it took Berlin. It is during these years that the generation witnessing and participating in events associated with sites in question pass away and are replaced by a new generation, without

the same attachments. Foote also states that commemoration and recognition usually coincide with important events such as anniversaries and centennials, or in Berlin's case the reinstatement of capital of a reunified Germany.[60] In the period from 1945 to Berlin Underworld Association's entrance in 2001, Berliners had come to terms with their Nazi past and therefore memories of the tower not associated with guilt or shame could surface. The period of time allowed those feelings of German victimization to surface as well. Berlin Underworld Association member Henry Gidom told me that the Humboldthain project would not have been possible in the 1980s as it would have been seen as politically incorrect and the members seen as "Nazis in disguise."[61] Just two decades later the association earned the highest prize for monument preservation in Germany, the Silver Bowl for the work they have done on Berlin's underground, including the flak towers.

On a broader note, the flak towers show that Berliners have come to terms with their Nazi past. While the Vienna flak towers have a "memorial entrepreneur," they still have yet to register in the collective historical identity of the city. Though equal amounts of time have past since the end of the war, Berliners could not deny the role they and their fellow countrymen played in the atrocities of World War II, forcing them to face their pasts. The Viennese on the other hand saw themselves as victims and are just recently coming to terms with their Nazi past. Whereas Berliners no longer see most Nazi-association structures in their landscape as toxic, the Viennese have yet to reach this point.

When looking back at the evolution of the treatment of the Humboldthain flak tower one gets a clear idea as to how Berliners have dealt with the physical remains from the Third Reich. A number of factors have played a part in the evolution of the tower over the years and it sits today not only telling a story of World War II, Hitler, German

[60] Foote, 262.
[61] Gidom, email.

suffering, Nazis and their oppression, but also the story of how Berlin came to terms with its past.

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